



47th District – 2001 Legislative Update

Representative Jack Cairnes

***For the people
of the 47th District***

***Auburn, Black Diamond,
Covington, Kent, King County,
Maple Valley, and Renton.***



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Dear Friends,

The 2001 Legislature has adjourned for the year. Though the regular session and three overtimes were a mixed bag of ups and downs, we the House Republicans, have worked hard to make sure taxpayer dollars are spent in the most effective and efficient way possible.

As a business owner in King County, I travel the roads of the 47th District and understand the frustrations caused by traffic congestion. I take this issue very seriously and have been willing to listen to all transportation proposals with an open mind. We must build a functional transportation system that meets the needs of the public by examining what hasn't worked and avoiding those pitfalls. Providing more money to continue business as usual would be like pouring more water into a leaky pail.

We have had a great deal of success this year. This session review provides an overview of these and other topics we addressed – issues that will have an impact on you and your family. If you have any questions or comments, please call my office, e-mail or send a letter. I thank you for the opportunity and look forward to reading your comments.

Sincerely,


Jack Cairnes
State Representative
47th District

I am deeply sorrowed by our country's losses. I also am convinced action is forthcoming. While it may be difficult, getting on with the business of our daily lives may be helpful in all of our recovery. With that in mind, I have prepared these comments on our time in Olympia. As always, I invite your thoughts and suggestions.

-Jack

2001 Legislative Update

TRANSPORTATION: What Really Happened

Media reports about a transportation “failure” have unfairly characterized both mine and my colleagues’ work in Olympia. This year we passed a transportation budget that includes \$3.5 billion in funding. I was proud to vote for this budget that didn’t raise taxes.



For the past seven years, I have worked to bring needed road improvements to the 47th District — projects such as new interchanges on Highway 18, Witte Road, sidewalks near our schools and other projects across the district. In total, hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to help increase safety and relieve congestion in our area.

On July 21, the Democrats presented legislators with a proposal that included a 40 percent tax increase including a gas tax increase of as much as 9 cents per gallon, an increase in the sales tax on car purchases, and increased weight fees for trucks and recreational vehicles. Plus, a regional plan was introduced that would have established a King County transportation taxing district. Many of you have contacted me with concerns regarding this regional plan – which I opposed. It’s reminiscent of the Rapid Transit taxing district, where we in the 47th District get the bill, but not the service.

There is no debating that Western Washington needs continued funding for congestion relief. I take my responsibility very seriously to find ways to stretch the taxes you pay to maximize our investments while not placing the financial burden of reducing Seattle and Bellevue’s congestion on the backs of 47th District residents.

I also opposed the transportation-funding package due to its 33 percent allocation to non-road projects. When the governor explained his “road” plan, he wasn’t telling you about this 33 percent requirement – a requirement he and his Democrat colleagues insisted upon. They were unwilling to concentrate on truly relieving congestion on our roads.

My goal from the beginning of this year was to develop a fair transportation plan that funded new roads. Our traffic congestion was created by a so-called “growth management” act that actually created an artificial scarcity of land. Democrats also sugar-coated this issue 10 years ago. The truth was and is that it actually reduced the transportation options available.

Before growth management, we had two options: bring the jobs to the people or bring the people to the jobs. Today we are left with only one option of bringing the people to the jobs. This is one of the main reasons we are faced with congestion each and every day.

Since January, we have pushed for transportation efficiency measures. Competitive bidding and streamlining the environmental permitting process must be improved to make transportation construction faster and less expensive. The streamlining measure has been signed into law, and it will go a long way to maximize the value of every taxpayer dollar spent to reduce the congestion that threatens our state’s families and economy. However, this is the only efficiency measure the governor and our Democrat counterparts have accepted so far.



YOUR 2001-03 STATE BUDGET



Earlier this year, all lawmakers seemed to agree that there were tough decisions to be made in crafting the state's operating budget.

Republicans proposed a "reality budget," the reality being that we simply didn't have the money to meet all the demands. We were going to have to set priorities and make decisions about where to direct our limited resources, just like families must do when planning their household budgets.

But in the end, the Democrats walked away from the table, choosing to ignore the realities we faced, knowing the decisions that we would have to make would be politically unpopular.

The Democrat budget that was ultimately adopted spends substantially more than we can afford. It spends \$667 million more than expected revenue, and under very conservative assumptions, the state's general fund will be about \$680 million in the red by the next biennium, not taking into account the attack of 9-11-01. Eventually lawmakers will have to raise taxes or cut programs. With the budget we have, those will be our only choices. I strongly oppose this unsustainable spending.

BUILDING THE ECONOMY

BUSINESS CLIMATE...

In recent months, we have been bombarded with dire warnings that our state's largest businesses will leave unless we adopt a transportation-funding package. While I agree that we need to fight congestion, the traffic problems in this state aren't the only reason business leaders are hinting at expansion outside Washington.

We must wake up to the fact that our state's oppressive business tax structure creates an unfriendly business climate. This year, I sponsored the Municipal Tax Fairness Bill, legislation that would bring consistency to taxation of Washington businesses. It was aimed at providing basic fairness and would lay the groundwork for easing the burdensome paperwork faced by manufacturers and retailers. I am working hard to hold the line on spending and reduce the scope and reach of government. It's my goal to bring reasonable change to a government process that in many ways seems out of control.

This is my seventh year working to help our more liberal colleagues understand what Republicans have known for some time – Washington isn't a business-friendly state. When you add an unfair tax structure to skyrocketing electricity and health care costs, plus a drought, it's a recipe for disaster.

...AND JOBS

When terrorists attacked New York and Washington, D.C., our hearts and prayers went out to those touched by the tragedy. The implications of this catastrophe then spread and, although our lives weren't in danger, our economy suffered a blow.



The two most recent Boeing announcements were a tough blow, but our plant in Renton appears to be safe. As a member of the Economic Forecast and Review Council and co-chair of the House Finance Committee, I will be closely monitoring the state's economy and continue proposing new ways to build the state's business structure.

Although it may be difficult, we have many reasons to stay positive in this time of uncertainty. No one can predict what will happen in the weeks and months ahead, but I maintain my commitment to a solid economic balance.

This area has faced similar economic downturns in the past 30 years and we will build on those experiences. We are a strong country and our economy will rebound.

EDUCATION

COMPENSATION FOR OUR TEACHERS

Throughout my tenure in the Legislature, I have been a proponent of the importance of fully funding education and supporting our state's talented teachers. Over the past decade, state spending on education has grown from \$5.8 billion to more than \$9.5 billion per biennium (our state government operates on a two-year budget cycle), an increase of more than 61 percent.

In November, the public made a strong statement by passing two initiatives that will add at least \$700 million to the budget, largely to fund increases in teacher salaries and reduce class sizes. The people in our state support public education and believe, like I do, that each and every child must be given the chance to succeed.



Mark Your Calendar

I along with Sen. Stephen Johnson and 5th District Reps. Cheryl Pflug and Glenn Anderson will be hosting a town meeting to discuss how the plague of methamphetamine is affecting our community. Representatives from local police agencies will be on hand to answer your questions while we will discuss what is happening on the state level.

When: Monday, October 8, 2001 – 7 p.m.

Where: Maple Valley Community Center
22010 248th St. Maple Valley
(corner of Witte Road and SE 248th)

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